

## Steal This Hook!

# Fear and Horror

By Robert Wiese



Horrific things can happen at any time, and they don't just have to be the gory events of slasher movies. In fact, the more horrific events play on the mind's fears instead of the body's. So this month we present a trio of strange events that can turn into wonderfully horrific scenarios with a little imagination on your part.

This month's hooks include suggestions for using them in a **Ravenloft** campaign, since Wizards of the Coast has its **Ravenloft** supplement coming out this month. If you love the Land of Dread as much as I do, then take a hook or two and have fun scaring your players.

### "And the Frogs Came, and Covered the Land . . ." -- *Forgotten Realms*

Laviguer, a farming and mining center in Impiltur and the only major city not on the coast, is a place where life can be normal one moment and strange the next. The nearby Earthspur Mountains provide bloodstone and gold . . . as well as monsters and other strangeness from time to time. For the most part, though, life moves at a steady pace without much interruption. Miners mine, merchants sell, people walk the streets from here to there... \*splat!\* "Ribbit." And sometimes a frog falls from the sky. "Ribbit."

Without warning, one frog turns into a rain of them, each one landing with a splat and yet surviving unharmed. People run scared and lock themselves inside, but the frogs become so numerous that they begin to find ways in. After a while, the cacophony of ribbiting begins to drive people a little crazy, not to mention the collateral damage of the rain of frogs. Before the day is out, frogs fall on the city for over 5 hours, thousands upon thousands of them. When it is all over, the city is knee-deep in the wriggling creatures, which have nowhere to go and no environment hospitable for them.

The PCs, in town to try the mountain trek to the Vast (or for some other reason), can find any number of people who would hire them to figure out where the frogs came from and whether they portend any danger to Laviguer -- for instance, merchants such as Grisallne the Gifted (human female expert 10/sorcerer 4, Cha 18). Grisallne is already thinking of ways to make money from this event, and so would like the information for different reasons. On the other end of things, a druid named Kotalla is concerned that this marks the beginning of a strange attack on the city, and she wants the PCs to find the source of the frogs and stop whoever is behind it. Kotalla can tell the PCs (assuming they did not already know with a DC 20 Knowledge [nature] check) that the frogs are all the same, and are all indigenous to a remote valley in the Earthfast Mountains some sixty or more miles away. Lastly, there is a little girl named Crytalle that would like the frogs all returned to their point of origin, because she is very concerned about their well-being. She is also wealthy enough to pay for their transport (well, her parents are) should the heroes arrange the logistics.



## d100 Motivations

01-50 Whoever hires the PCs is sincere in what he or she says.

51-80 The townsfolk, a superstitious lot, know that some evil magic was behind the attack of frogs, and they want vengeance on the person responsible.

81-00 Someone in town wanted the frogs to rain, possibly to disrupt the trade efforts of a rival, or to create an atmosphere of mistrust and fear.

## d100 Complications

01-30 The rain of frogs was caused by Dapex (male elf druid/wizard/arcane hierophant) who found the frogs annoying and used magic to expel every last one of them from the valley that he claimed as his own. However, because they were part of the food chain, Dapex will have other problems soon enough.

31-50 In the wake of the frogs, another vastly more dangerous creature comes calling. A red dragon that lairs in the Earthfast Mountains saw the stream of frogs and followed it east as it went. Now that it has found Laviguer, it wants treasure.

51-70 A cult of the demon lord Obox-ob has established itself in the valley, and it is using the valley to grow some new vermin for attacking mountain communities. The rare frogs of the valley are natural predators of the new vermin, and in typical demon fashion the cultists removed the frogs rather than find a different valley. The vermin will be let loose on Laviguer as a first test if their creators are not stopped. (In this case, feel free to make the vermin appear as something particularly creepy to your characters.)

71-90 Among the frogs, some slaadi begin terrorizing the populace as soon as they land, throwing other frogs around in addition to their normal attack modes.

91-00 Way more frogs fell on Laviguer than lived in the valley. Where did the rest come from? Was this some kind of demonic attack? Does the trouble extend to another world, or another plane?

## Campaign Adaptation

A rain of frogs can happen just about anywhere with a little help. Think about inflicting it on these campaign worlds.

**Eberron:** Set this adventure in Dragonroost, in Zilargo. The frogs can come from a valley in the Seawall Mountains. You might even get the goblin nation of Darguun involved as villains.

**Ravenloft:** Stage a rain of frogs in Viktal or Kellee, in Tepest. The people there are beset by horrors from the woods on a regular basis, but a rain of frogs should really make them troubled.

**Generic:** Anywhere will do. The valley that is home to the frogs doesn't even have to be close.

**d20 Modern:** A lot of frogs naturally brings to mind Egypt and Biblical plagues. Some alien power based in the Sudan could be modeling their terror attacks on ancient world curses.

## "But What I Hate I Do . . ." -- *Eberron*

Athandra, sitting near the center of Thrane, is home to the adventuring group called the Six Aeylisors (they are not related, but the original group was). The Six hunt treasure across Khorvaire and even on Xen'drik.



Lately, they returned from the Demon Wastes with a huge treasure of gold, figurines, jewels, and a few magic items (which they kept). The rest they sold to traders. The night after the sale was completed, the first body was found.

No one knows who killed Mishrie, daughter of a tavern owner, but her manner of death is clear: She was stabbed repeatedly. The next few bodies were killed in different ways: decapitation, drowning in a well, being buried alive, and so forth. Either the murderer liked to vary his or her technique, or there are a number of murderers. No one realizes that there might be a connection to the treasure brought back by the Six, because the Six left town on another adventure before the third body was found.

The constabulary of Athandra begins to get desperate after the eleventh victim is found with no suspects. They send to Sigilstar for some magical help in finding the killer(s), and the authorities there send the PCs.



## d100 Motivations

01-25 The killings are being caused by a curse on the treasure's figurines. Once the figurines are removed from their place of safety, they begin infecting random people with a magical mental disease that turns them into vicious killers. As the figurines move around, so does the curse spread.

26-50 The killings are caused by a ghost that inhabits part of the treasure. The ghost is that of an ancient murderer who now can continue his "craft" only by possessing others and using them to kill.

51-75 The killings are the result of recent lycanthrope activity in the region. The lycanthropes seek revenge on the Six for some slain pack members, so they want to slay anyone known to the Six (which pretty much means the whole town). They use different methods to disguise their true nature.

76-00 The head law officer in Athandra is possessed by a demon and is behind all the attacks, whether he knows it or not. The demon may or may not be related to the treasure brought back by the Six Aeylisors.

## d100 Complications

01-25 All of the murder victims return as ghosts themselves, looking for final rest. However, along the way they are also looking for vengeance against their killer, and they are not very discriminate upon whom they take vengeance.

## Campaign Adaptation

If you're not running an Eberron campaign, you can still adapt this idea. You might find concepts in *Ghostwalk* useful, though the setting itself won't be. *Libris Mortis* could also be valuable.

**Forgotten Realms:** This is a good adventure for anywhere in the Realms really, but you might especially try one of the cities of Sembia or the Dragon Coast.

**Ravenloft:** This adventure is well suited to the stark urban poverty of Nova Vaasa, though it could work well in Port-a-Lucine in Dementlieu.

**Generic:** The city in which this adventure takes place needs to be large enough that the murders don't dominate the news, and small enough that they are important (and that there are not magical dwellers who would just wave their hands and solve the problem).

**d20 Modern:** Though this could happen anywhere, especially in a Lovecraftian New England, you might consider Brazil for this adventure instead; the South



26-65 The Six Aeylisors are carrying the curse with them, and they are on their way to much more populated cities such as Flamekeep.

American elements could make the story very interesting if your PCs don't already come from South America.

66-85 A group of thieves is using the situation, and the fact that the constabulary is distracted by the murders, to their advantage and have started a crime spree. Some of their crimes could include murder, which would further confuse the investigation.

86-00 The curse prevents contact with the dead victims, so *Speak with Dead*, *Raise Dead*, and the like are useless as investigative tools.

## "I Fade Away Like an Evening Shadow" -- *Forgotten Realms*

Cimbar, the nominal capitol of Chessenta, is a city known for the arts and culture as well as for strength of sword-arm. Indeed, the populace is required to participate in the arts, philosophy, and music. It is also known for its colleges of sages, artists, and wizards. The college of sages is always seeking to expand its collection of old (and new) tomes, and recently that has brought on a problem.

Adventurers unearthed a collection of old tomes from the days of Netheril, and they sold them at a hefty profit to the college of sages. The sages, seeing a need for a new "collection" area, opened an old storage room that had not been used in hundreds of years. Within, the sages had a lot of junk cleared out. Among this junk were a number of bones of humans, rats, and dogs.

### d100 Motivations

01-45 Kleffes is on the up-and-up about everything he says. He really does want the problem solved with as little fuss as possible.

46-70 Kleffes is sincere in wanting to know what is going on, but he doesn't care about his fellow sages nearly as much as he says he does. There is competition among sages in the same fields, and, should a rival die, then Kleffes would become more prominent. Kleffes would never kill anyone himself, though.

71-00 Kleffes doesn't care about the sages. He is actually an agent for a sage's college in Soorenar and sees this as a chance to make this college look foolish (and thus lose station). He wants all the details made as public as possible.

### d100 Complications

01-40 The storeroom contained the bones of some victims of a prior warlord of Chessenta, and, when the bones were disturbed,



the victims returned as shadows. Now they haunt the hallways, striking from stealth and trying to remain undetected as they drain the strength away from the sages.

41-60 There is a lot of light for reading throughout the library, but the shadows avoid it and strike at those in book storage rooms or those going to or from somewhere. The shadows stay in the walls as much as possible.

61-80 Too late! As the PCs begin their investigation, they find a dead sage slumped at a table near the old storeroom. He has been dead for a few hours, and he has become one more shadow that the PCs will have to fight eventually.

81-90 Should the PCs somehow talk to a shadow or to the corpses that were removed from the room, they can learn the (false) information that the shadows can be put to rest if the bones are buried honorably with a full description of the crimes against them. If anyone does this, the shadows take a week off from hunting sages to lull people into thinking the problem has gone away.

91-00 The storeroom contains a *portal* linking the room to the Plane of Shadow. Other shadow creatures can come through as well should the *portal* be opened.

## About the Author

**Robert Wiese** entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

He is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing, and he models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno.

## Campaign Adaptation

This creepy adventure can work in many campaign worlds, including yours. *Libris Mortis* might be useful for the shadows. You could also work some shadow magic into the adventure using *Tome of Magic*.

**Eberron:** This adventure is practically begging to be set in the Library of Korranberg, but you might consider Morgrave University or a large city in Aundair.

**Ravenloft:** Use a bardic library in Skald, in Kartakass, as the setting for this adventure. The shadowy threat contrasts well with the general joyfulness of Kartakass.

**Generic:** Any sage college will do, or even a college of wizardry or a bardic college. The sages are better because they are less likely to have the magical resources to solve the problem themselves.

**d20 Modern:** There are libraries everywhere, and museums work just as well. How about the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian, or the British Museum?

Based on the original **Dungeons & Dragons®** game by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and on the new edition of the **Dungeons & Dragons** game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison. **D&D**, **Dungeons & Dragons**, and **Forgotten Realms** are registered trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All Wizards characters, character names, and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This material is protected under the laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction of or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This product is a work of fiction. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, places, or events is purely coincidental. This Wizards of the Coast game product contains no Open Game Content. No portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without written permission. To learn more about the Open Gaming License and the d20 System License, please visit **[www.wizards.com/d20](http://www.wizards.com/d20)**. ©2001-2006 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All rights reserved. Made in the U.S.A.

**Visit our website at [www.wizards.com/dnd](http://www.wizards.com/dnd)**